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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 543

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, I'm not going to go around the floor and ask that question but I did it to call people's attention to what we're looking at, and I do believe there might be some on the floor who would say, yes, I would vote to create such a program. And it would stamp them for what their attitude is, creating a program exclusively for use by church schools and they also have access to these other two programs, and they have raided them. Because of the total amount of money appropriated for all three of these programs, these private schools get 58.2 percent of it. You may as well say 60 percent of it goes to them. That...they triple-dip. They go into all of them. We ought to abolish that church school fund. I'm going to repeat what I said earlier because the Legislature lacks the grit, lacks the heart, lacks the nerve, lacks the will to do the right thing. I'm going to consider legal action, and if it costs me money out of my pocket, that's what the price is that we pay to do the things that we believe in. And if the court rules the way I think that it should, I guarantee you that you are going to hear it from me on this floor. A person should not have to go to court to get the Legislature to do what it ought to do, but if I go to court and win, that will not be getting the Legislature to do what it ought to do. The Legislature still has not done what it ought to do. It will mean the court stepped in because the Legislature abdicated its responsibility. I don't believe there is any rationale that would justify creating a fund exclusively for these private schools. Private schools are not the state's responsibility. And I think I have a good chance to win. Some people talk about clogging the courts with lawsuits. Lawsuits are filed, in many case, because of bad laws, the implementation of those laws, the application and, in some cases, the misapplication of those laws. What I am offering with this amendment is to do away with all of the increases straight across the board for all three of these programs. At least do no additional harm. Strike the \$750,000 from the SSAP. Strike \$750,000 from SAP. Strike \$750,000 from PEAP. Leave every thing just as it is. They will still get their appropriation with the church schools getting the lion's share, over